

Testimony in Support of LD 1336

Emily Stowers, Farmingdale Resident

Good afternoon, my name is Emily Stowers and I'm from Farmingdale. I'm here to voice my strong support for LD 1336.

Maine has been incredibly fortunate to share a special friendship with Aomori, Japan, for over 135 years. This relationship began in 1889, when a merchant ship from Bath wrecked off Aomori's coast, and local residents heroically rescued four sailors. That act of kindness sparked a lasting bond that continues to grow today.

When I was 17-years-old 20 years ago I participated in a 2 week cultural exchange with Misawa High School in Aomori through Hall-Dale high school. It was a life-changing experience and the memories I have from that experience I will cherish forever. The emotional and personal connections that form through cultural exchanges are invaluable. These exchanges foster a sense of global community, reminding us that despite our differences, we all share a common humanity. When we take the time to understand and respect one another's culture, we create a more peaceful and connected world.

Through numerous cultural exchange programs—between students, artists, and communities—this relationship has enriched lives across Maine. These exchanges broaden perspectives, build respect, and help our young people prepare for a global future.

LD 1336 is important because it strengthens that legacy. It supports education, cultural understanding, and even economic opportunities. Japan is an important trade partner for Maine, and deeper ties can lead to more collaboration and investment.

But beyond the practical benefits, these connections remind us of our shared humanity. They help build a world where empathy, learning, and peace are possible.

Thank you for supporting LD 1336 and for helping keep Maine's friendship with Japan strong.